Course on Great Experiments in Psychology
Professor Rajlakshmi Guha
Centre for Educational Technology
Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur
Module 4
Lecture No 16
The False Consensus Effect

Hello everybody welcome to this week's lecture on the false consensus effect. How do we think about the situations that are happening around us? Do we actually think like others do or do others think the way we do, like the way we do? Now this there was belief that most of the people in the way we do and so just to prove that all our intuition is not correct a group of psychologists in Stanford University experimented on students and tried to show that they often suffer from his known as false consensus effect.

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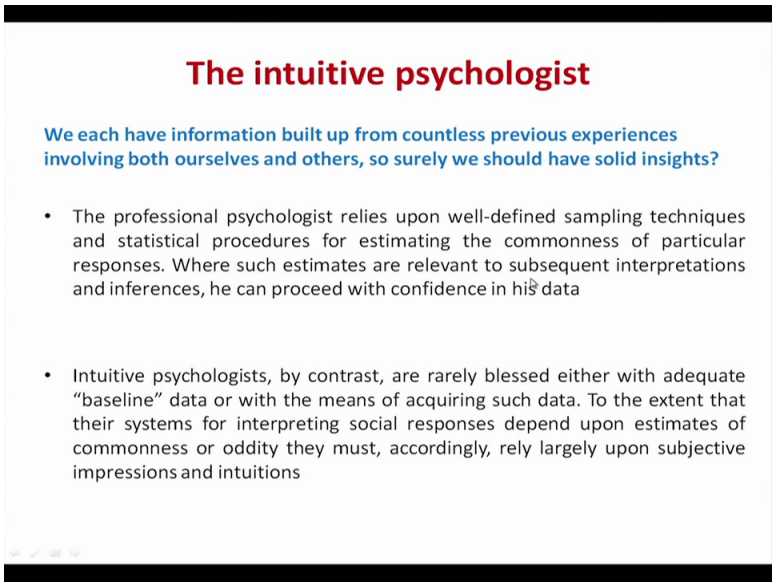

So most of us are have our information built up from countless previous experiences involving both ourselves and others and we believe that we must really be having a very good insight. Generally the difference between an intuitive psychologist and a professional psychologist is, that intuitive psychologist are generally they have low baseline data, they go by their interpretation of social responses as per how they have learnt through their experiences and accordingly these largely depend upon subjective impressions and intuitions.

On the other hand professional psychologist lies upon well-defined sampling technique and statistical procedures for estimating the commonness of particular responses. So that is through a strict experimentation and observation the professional psychologist comes to

interpret something and these estimates are relevant to subsequent interpretation and inferences and therefore he can proceed with confidence in his data.

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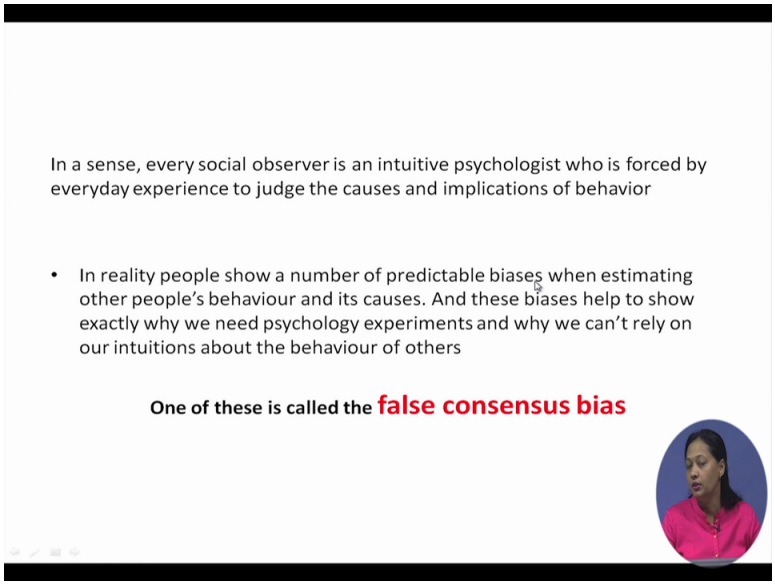

So that actually defines how why professional psychology depends on experimentation because most of the times that we the way we think, it may not happen actually in the real in the real situation it may not happen the same way. So every social observer is actually an intuitive psychologist, so we do not need to be psychologist per se but you will often come across people saying that you know I understand his psychology or I know how this individual things, he is doing it is way because of so-and-so, because of such and such.

So we have this interpretation behaviour and most of the time it is seen that in reality these have predictable biases and especially when we are estimating others' behaviour and causes. And that if you just go through the attribution theory by Kelly you will come to see it is a very interesting theory and these experiments later on specially the one on false consensus bias that we going to talk about today were based on attribution theory by Kelly. And today we are going to discuss about the false consensus eyes.

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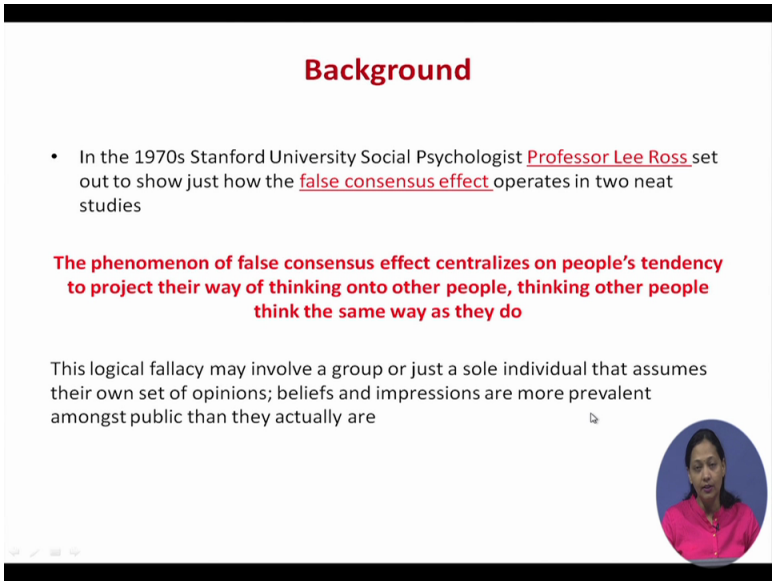

So what happened was in 1970s that is precisely 1977 Prof Lee Ross along with his associates, tried to show how this false consensus effect operates and generally what is the false consensus effect.it is a phenomena of centralises people's tendency to project their ways of thinking onto other people, thinking that other people actually think the same way as they do. So if I really wish to do something I would also project this thinking on somebody else and say that well you know generally people behave this way and generally people would like to do things this way. So it is actually my thought, my idea, my circles, my pre-judgements that are basing my inferences about other people.

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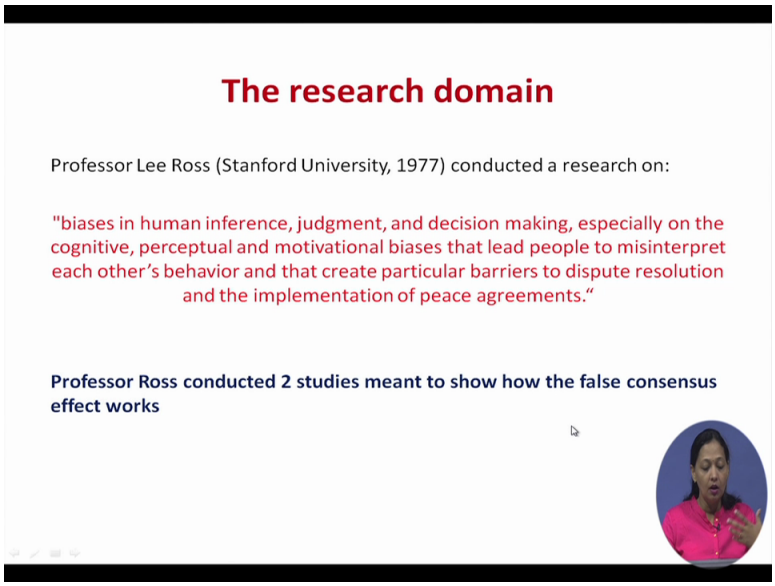

So this logical fallacy may involve a group of people or an individual and as I said it depends on the individual's own set of opinions, believes and impression and especially amongst the public. So Prof Lee roars conducted a research on bias is in human inferences, judgements and decision-making especially on the cognitive, perceptual and motivational biases that lead people to misinterpret each other's behaviour that creates the color barriers to dispute resolution and the implementation of these agreements.

So he primarily inducted to studies, actually there are four studies but you can actually sum it up as 2, but we are going to discuss the four major studies and show how the false consensus effect works and my new we are going to do it through proper experimentation so that is what Prof Ross did, so he showed through experiments, through different studies on the Stanford undergraduate students, mind you they are undergraduate college going students who are supposed to be educated and unbiased.

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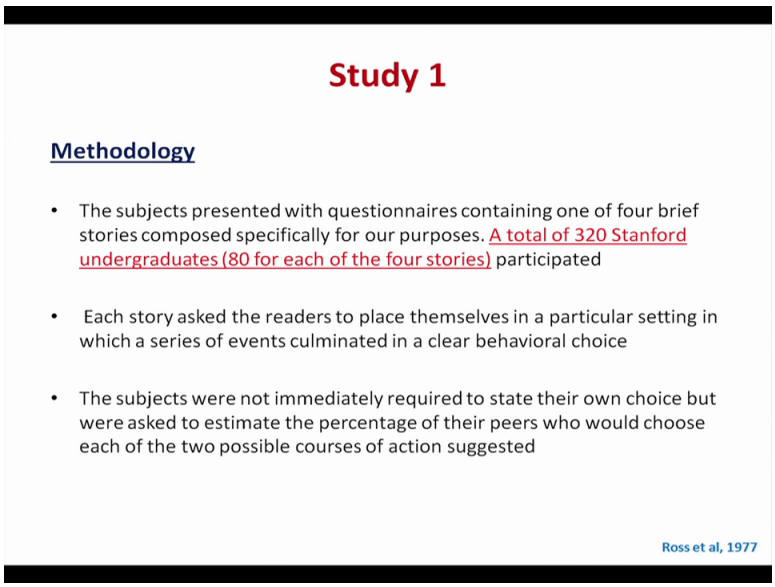

So not generalising about people's not trying to consciously project their opinion other people. So was the first early actually involved was a total of 320 Stanford undergraduates and there were there Prof was gave 4 stories or 4 situations and uhh, so out of the 320 they were divided into groups of 80 each and they were each given story and when the readers were asked to place themselves in a particular setting in which a series of events culminated in a clear behavioural choice. So after reading the story they were asked to they were required to give a judgement as the questions asked.

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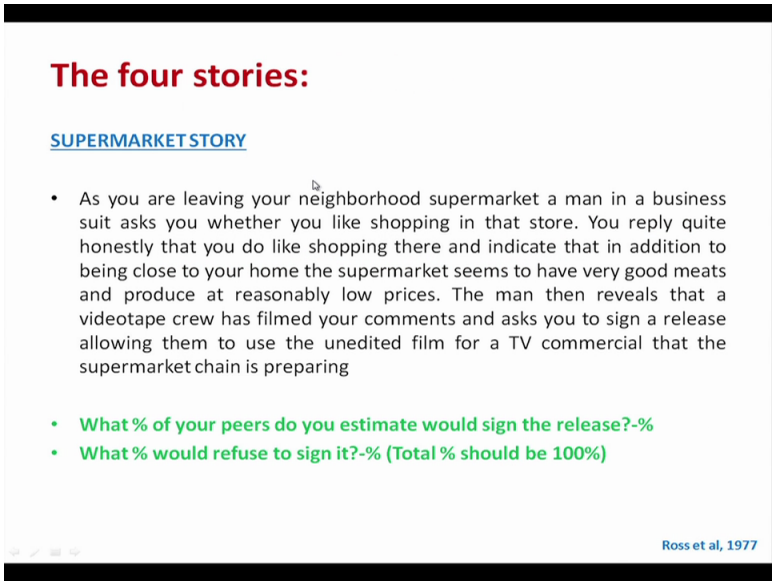

So the first story was a supermarket story, so I will just read the story to you, so it is, as you are leaving your neighborhood supermarket man in a business suit ask you whether you like shopping in that store, so you reply quite honestly that you do not like shopping there and indicate that in addition to being close to your home supermarket seems to have very good needs and produced at reasonable low prices.

The man then reveals that a video tape crew has filmed your comment and asks you to sign a release allowing them to use the unedited film for a TV commercial that the supermarket chain is preparing. So the question asked to the 80 students who took this who read this story was, what percent of your peers do you estimate would sign the release and what percent would refuse to sign it? So the total sum had to be 100 percent.

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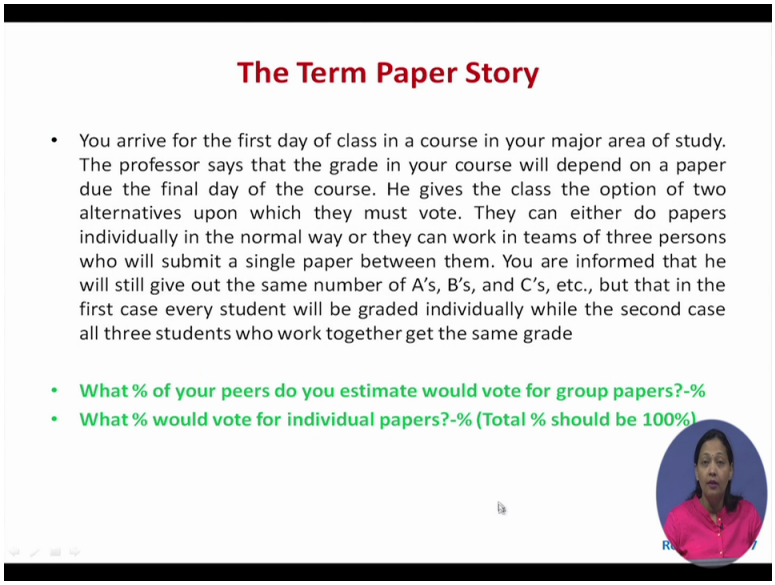

The next story was that of a term paper, so here the term paper story went like this, you arrive for the first day of class in a course in your major area of study. The professor says that the grade in your course will depend on a paper due the final day of the course. He gives the class the option of two alternatives upon which they must vote. They can either do papers individually in the normal way or they can work in teams of three persons who will submit a single paper between them.

You are informed that he will still give you out the same number of A's, B's and C's, et cetera, but that in the first case every student will be graded individually while in the second case all three students who work together get the same great. So they are actually going to war in groups, so the again the questions that were asked to this group of 80 students was, what percent of your peers do you estimate would vote for group papers? And what percent would vote for individual paper?

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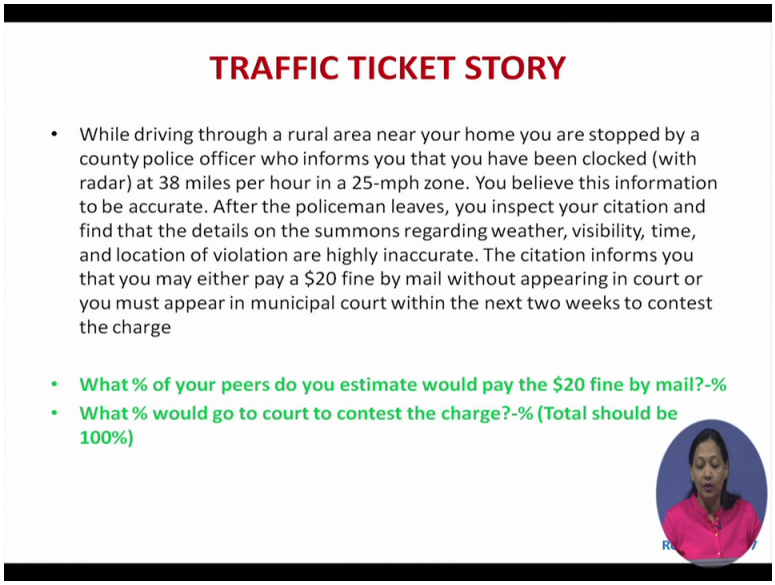

So the third story was about a traffic ticket story. So while driving through a rule area near your home you are stopped by a county police officer who informs you that you have been clocked at 38 mph in a 25 mph zone, so that you have been clocked for speeding. You believe this information to be accurate after the policeman leaves; you inspect the citation and find that the details on the summons regarding whether, visibility, time and location of voilation are highly inaccurate.

The citation informs you that you may either pay a 20 dollar fine by mail without appearing in court you must appear in municipal court within the next two weeks to contest the charge. And the question asked to this group of 80 students was, what percentage of your peers do you estimate would pay the 20 dollar fine by mail? And what person would go to court to contest the charge?

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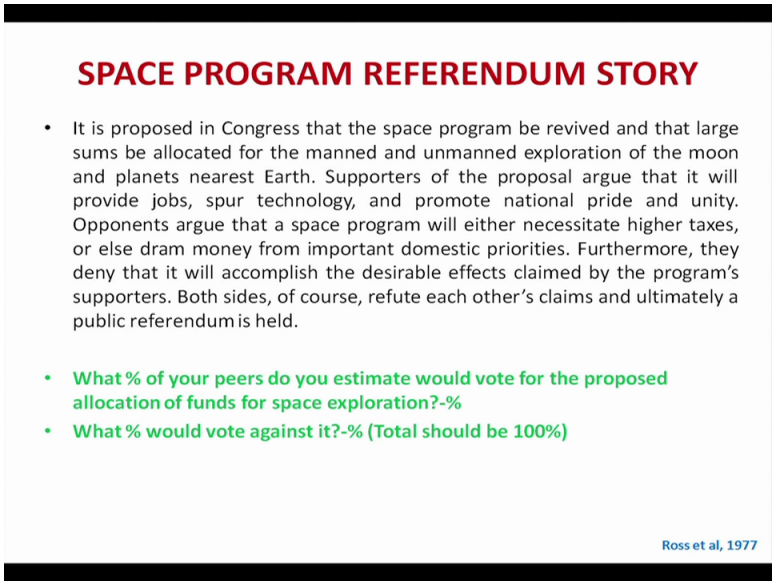

So and the final story, so of the 4th group got was a space program referendum story. And it was the story goes like this, that it is proposed in Congress that the space program be revived and that large sum be allotted to the manned and unmanned exploration of the Moon and planets near Earth. Supporters of the proposal argue that it will provide jobs, spur technology and promote national pride and unity.

Opponents argue that the space program will either necessitate higher taxes, or else dram money from important domestic priorities. Furthermore, they deny that it will accomplish the desirable effects claimed by the program supporters. Both sides of course, refute each other's claim and ultimately a public referendum is held. So the question asked was what percent of your peer do you estimate would vote for the proposal allocation of funds for space exploration? And what percent would vote against it? So mind you, all these four situations, so these four stories are given to groups of 80 students each and these are all undergraduates Stanford students, so what would happen?

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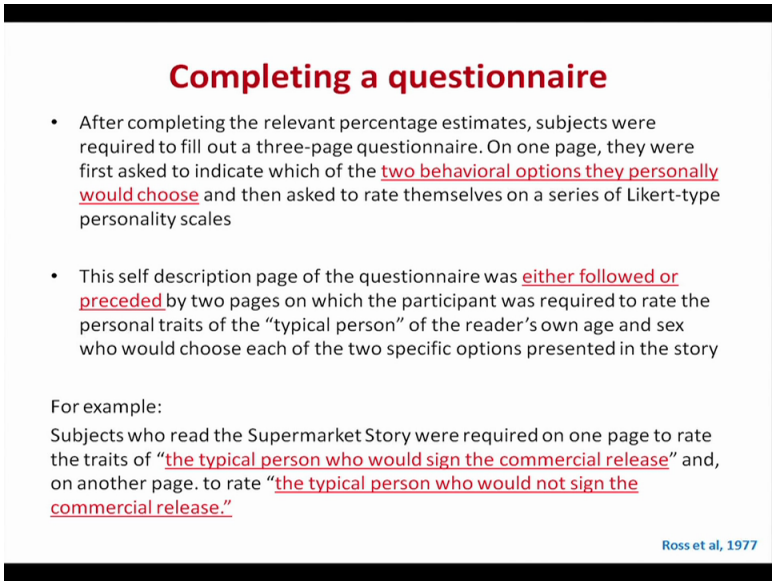

So after this they were asked to complete a questionnaire and on one page their first asked to indicate to behavioural options they personally would choose. So what is what they would chose and they were asked to give a personality assessment test and after this was another two-page on the participant where the participant was required to rate the typical personal who would means that is the other person how would the others rate this?

So he was supposed to rate the characteristics or the personality traits of the other person, so before this when that is the peers so that there were two questions asked, so who what number of peers would agree to it and others would disagree to it. So here uhh, in the questionnaire one part of it actually involve the individual answering, what he would prefer to do?

And the other would be were the characteristics and also the personality traits of the individual and the other would be the characteristics and personality traits that he would attribute to uh the peer. So say this example is, his subject who is reading the supermarket story were required on one page to rate the traits of "the typical person who would sign the commercial release" and "the typical certain who would not sign the commercial release". So then what would be the characteristics traits?

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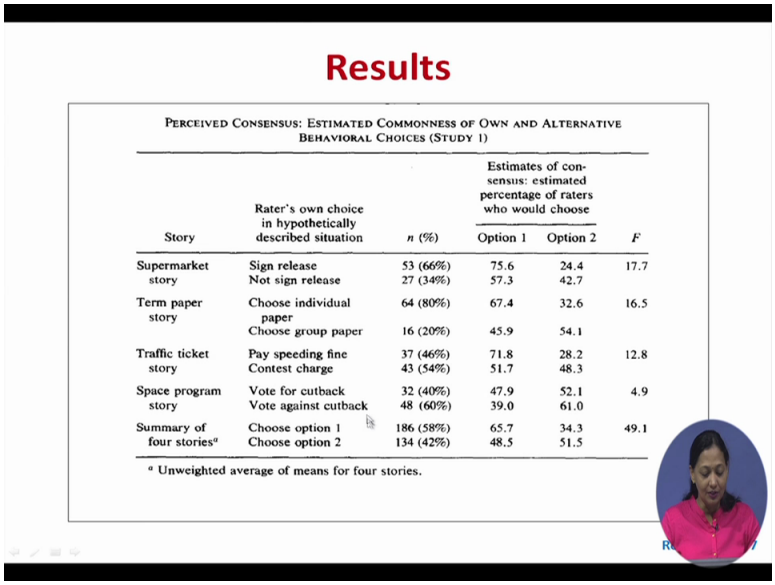

And so these are the results so it was seen that and they felt for the supermarket story, 53% would sign the release and 27% would not sign the release. For the term papers 64% would sign, so the so what would be the question was? That how many would vote for group papers, so here they feel that 16% would opt for the group paper and 64 person would opt for the individual paper so for speeding fine 37 person would pay the fine and 43% would contest and for the space program, so vote for cutback would be 32% and against cutback would be 48% and it was seen that option one was chosen by one in six people, so on the other hand for option two in all the four stories and 34 people so that is 42% actually choose the second option.

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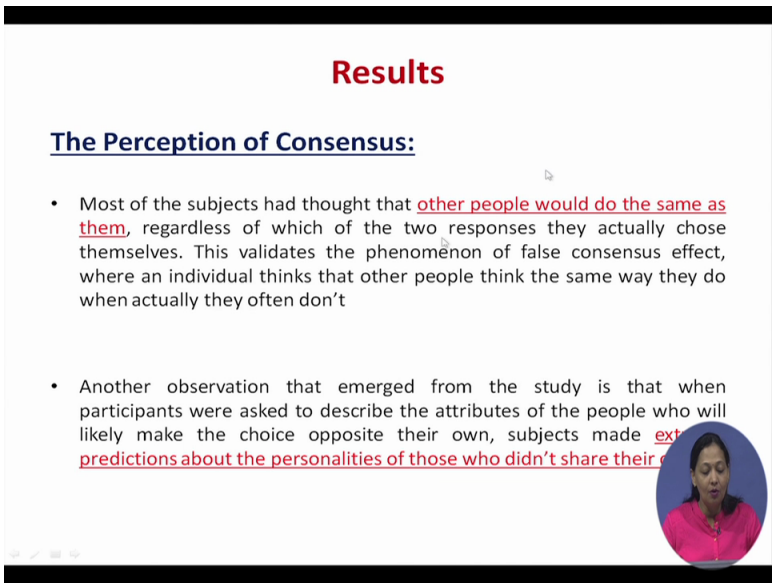

Now sorry the others would all be in numbers only the last one I have mentioned in percentage. So what do these results actually show, the results show that there is a perception of consensus and what is the perception of consensus? That is most of the subjects thought that other people would do the same as them, regardless of which of the two responses they actually chose themselves.

So this validates the phenomena of the false consensus effects because in reality people do not naturally or always believe or behave the way that we do stop another observation that emerged from this study was that when participants were asked to describe the attributes of the people who will likely make the choice opposite their own, these subjects were made the subject made extreme predictions about these people.

So the personalities have to be very different from their own, so that is how the attribute them that individuals, generally we do this you know you can try this study with some of your friends and colleagues also stop so you will see that most of the time it happens is the feel that individuals who are like cars will think like we do and individuals who are very different from ours will probably behave in a different way. So this was so this was what came out of the results.

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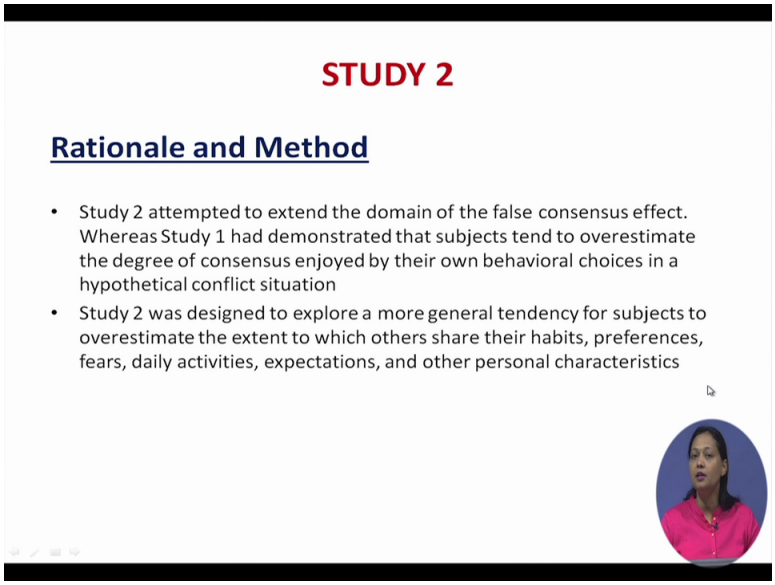

Now again another study of a similar type was done to actually checkout the domain of the false consensus effect and in this it was designed to explore a more general tendency for subjects to overestimate the extent to which others share their habits, preferences, fears, daily

activities, expectations and other personal characteristics. So you are the second study and to see to what extent does everything that people share our characteristics.

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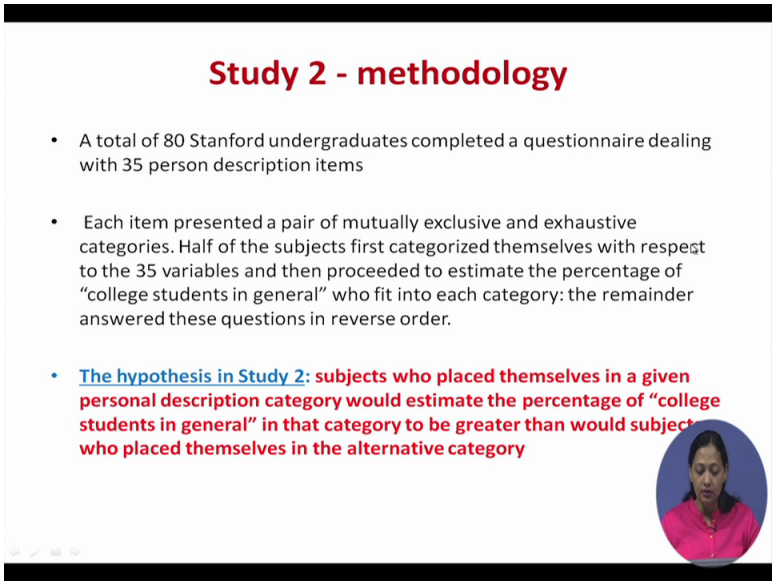

So here again 80 Stanford undergraduates completed a questionnaire dealing with 35 personal description items and each item presented a pair of mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories and hear the hypothesis of this study was, subjects who placed themselves in a given personal description category would estimate the percentage of "college students in general" in that category to be greater than would subject who placed themselves in the alternative category. So in whichever they whichever traits we attribute ourselves with we believe, so that that most of the people most of the college students in this case because it was done on college students that most of the college students in general would belong to that category.

So here we are talking of personality traits, in the previous study we are actually talking about the decisions that would that an individual would take during a situation. So Ross and his colleagues, they inferred that we look at situations in a particular way because we and we interpret that others will also look at the situation in a particular way because they feel that the others also share similar attributes, similar characteristics like we do. So in this study, they were actually trying to see how many people we think would share our type of characteristics is the similar characteristic.

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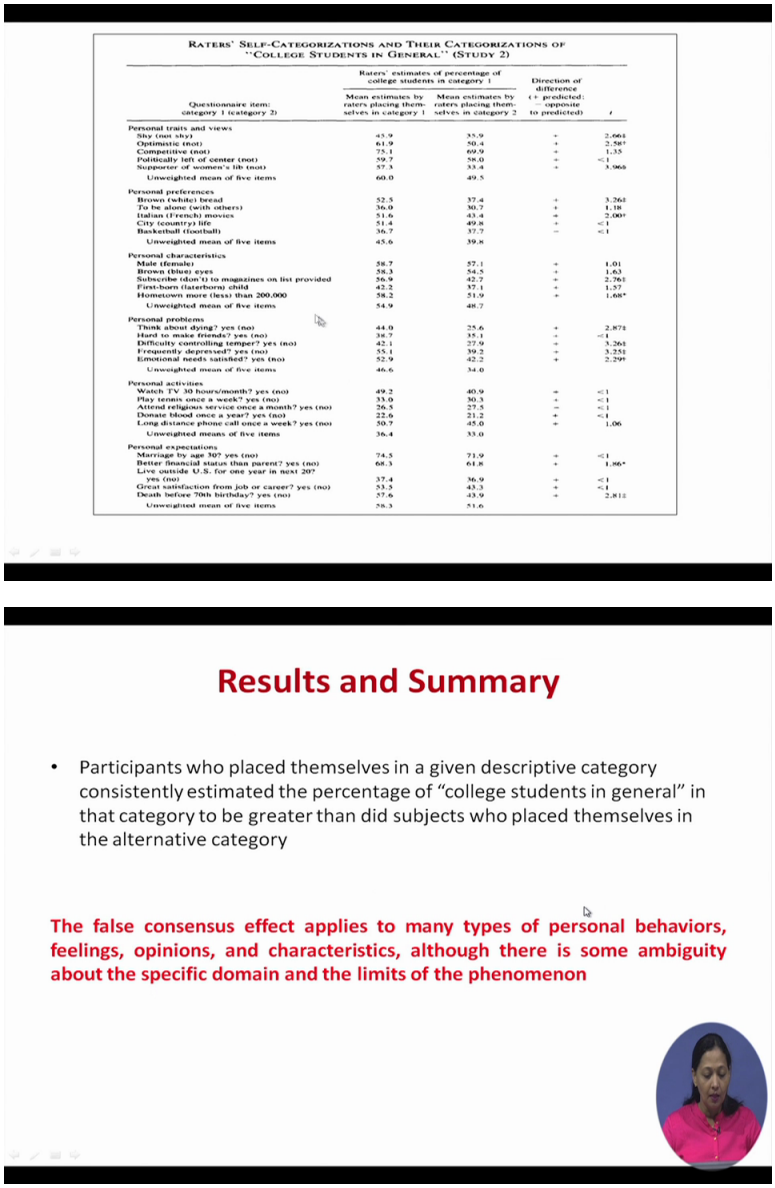

RATERS' SELF-CATEGORIZATIONS AND THEIR CATEGORIZATIONS OF "COLLEGE STUDENTS IN GENERAL" (STUDY 2)

Questionnaire item: category 1 (category 2)	Raters' estimates of percentage of college students in category 1: Mean estimates by raters placing themselves in category 1	Mean estimates by raters placing themselves in category 2	Direction of difference (+ predicted; − opposite to predicted)	t
Personal traits and views				
Shy (not shy)	45.9	35.9	+	2.66‡
Optimistic (not)	61.9	50.4	+	2.58†
Competitive (not)	75.1	69.9	+	1.35
Politically left of center (not)	59.7	58.0	+	<1
Supporter of women's lib (not)	57.3	33.4	+	3.96§
Unweighted mean of five items	60.0	49.5		
Personal preferences				
Brown (white) bread	52.5	37.4	+	3.26‡
To be alone (with others)	36.0	30.7	+	1.18
Italian (French) movies	51.6	43.4	+	2.00*
City (country) life	51.4	49.8	+	<1
Basketball (football)	36.7	37.7	−	<1
Unweighted mean of five items	45.6	39.8		
Personal characteristics				
Male (female)	58.7	57.1	+	1.01
Brown (blue) eyes	58.3	54.5	+	1.63
Subscribe (don't) to magazines on list provided	56.9	42.7	+	2.76‡
First-born (laterborn) child	42.2	37.1	+	1.37
Hometown more (less) than 200,000	58.2	51.9	+	1.68*
Unweighted mean of five items	54.9	48.7		
Personal problems				
Think about dying? yes (no)	44.0	25.6	+	2.87‡
Hard to make friends? yes (no)	38.7	35.1	+	<1
Difficulty controlling temper? yes (no)	42.1	27.9	+	3.26‡
Frequently depressed? yes (no)	55.1	39.2	+	3.25‡
Emotional needs satisfied? yes (no)	52.9	42.2	+	2.29†
Unweighted mean of five items	46.6	34.0		
Personal activities				
Watch TV 30 hours/month? yes (no)	49.2	40.9	+	<1
Play tennis once a week? yes (no)	33.0	30.3	+	<1
Attend religious service once a month? yes (no)	26.5	27.5	−	<1
Donate blood once a year? yes (no)	22.6	21.2	+	<1
Long distance phone call once a week? yes (no)	50.7	45.0	+	1.06
Unweighted means of five items	36.4	33.0		
Personal expectations				
Marriage by age 30? yes (no)	74.5	71.9	+	<1
Better financial status than parent? yes (no)	68.3	61.8	+	1.86*
Live outside U.S. for one year in next 20? yes (no)	37.4	36.9	+	<1
Great satisfaction from job or career? yes (no)	53.5	43.3	+	<1
Death before 70th birthday? yes (no)	57.6	43.9	+	2.81‡
Unweighted mean of five items	58.3	51.6		

Results and Summary

- Participants who placed themselves in a given descriptive category consistently estimated the percentage of "college students in general" in that category to be greater than did subjects who placed themselves in the alternative category

The false consensus effect applies to many types of personal behaviors, feelings, opinions, and characteristics, although there is some ambiguity about the specific domain and the limits of the phenomenon

And this is just a sample that I have taken from rosters 1977 on journal of experiments in social psychology and you will see that these have personal traits and views, personal preferences, characteristics, problem and so on and the results show that the participants who placed themselves in a given descriptive category, consistently estimated percentage of college students in general in that category to be greater than the subjects who placed themselves in the alternative category. So the hypothesis was actually proved true.

The false consensus effects applies to many types of personal behaviours and feelings and opinions and characteristics, although there are some ambiguity about the specific domain and the limits of the phenomena, so there should be further studies on this and if you just look up Ross (())(17:53) you will see that thereafter we know that have been several studies that

was done on the false consensus effect. And study 3 and study 4 are very interesting so study three so far we have seen Ross tried to see how people behave think others would behave situation and then there was this personality attributes that we would give you another person that we would attribute to another person.

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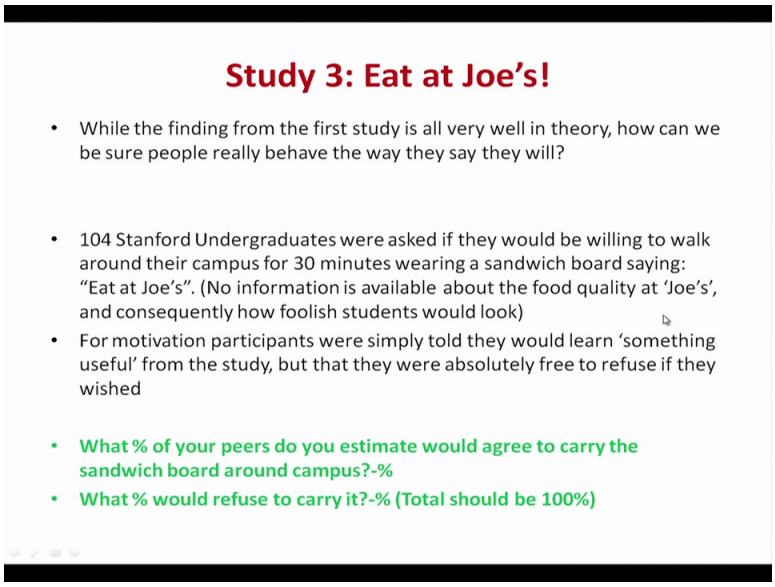

3rd was that it was going to be more of an action based thing, so in the third study hundred and four Stanford undergraduates were asked if they would be willing to walk around their campus for 30 minutes wearing a sandwich board saying "eat at Joe's". Now firm motivation students were told the participants were told at this was they would learn something useful study and this would really help in the scientific you know experimentation and they were absolutely free to refuse if they wish to. So here so where now this required an action and here the students were asked what percentage of peers do you estimate would agree to carry the sandwich board around campus? And what percentage would refuse to do it? So what do you think would happen?

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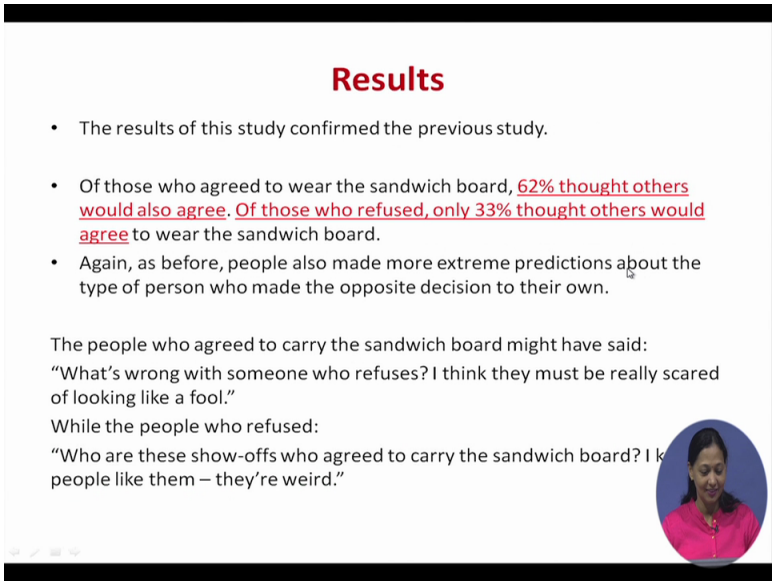

So the results were similar as the previous study, so what did that show, that of those who agreed to wear the sandwich board of them 62% thought the others would also agree and those who refused, they thought that only 33% would agree to wear the sandwich board. So people would they so this again confirms that we think that people will actually go by the way we are thinking or rather if you put it this way that people also think the way we do and people who agreed to carry the sandwich board might have said, "what is wrong with someone who refuse?

I think they must be really scared of looking like a fool". While the people who refuse could have said that "who are these show-offs who agreed to carry the sandwich board? So this again so this was the third study where it was more action-based and it was an estimation of how many people, if you are willing to take an action, how many people would also be willing, according to your opinion to take that action.

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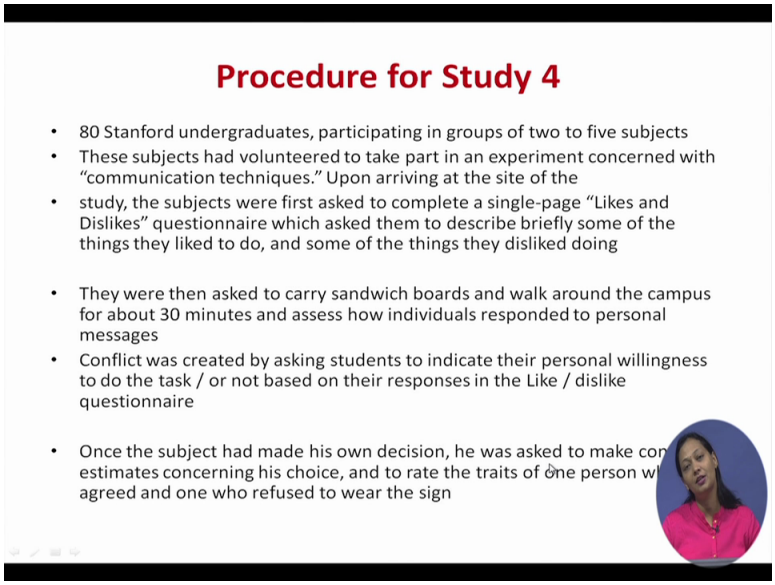

The fourth study was where Ross and his colleagues actually introduced a conflict mechanism. This is very interesting, here actually the action has to be done, so 80 Stanford's undergraduates again participated in groups of 2 to 5 subjects and the subjects had volunteered to take part in an experiment concerned with communication techniques, so upon arriving the subjects were asked to complete a single page of likes and dislikes questionnaire and then they were asked something that they like to do and some things that they dislike doing.

Now then they were asked, whether they would be willing any sandwich board and walk around the campus so it is a continuation of the previous study but different subjects were taken and that so here where they were asked whether they would be they would be willing to carry the sandwich boards across campus, to see whether the messages you know direct messages were really helpful. So individual responded to post messages because this was a study in communication technique.

So has the conflict been created by these subject being asked to indicate a personal willingness to carry the board as per referring to the likes and dislikes they have mentioned in the questionnaire. So if a person has mentioned that I really like interacting with people or really like to do some to do a task actively and the conflict created wars you have written something in your questionnaire and later would you really like to carry on this act of taking a sandwich board around. So if a person really did not wish to take it around campus, take the sandwich board around campus then that would be he would be in a conflicting tuition to do what he had written in the questionnaire.

So once the subject has made his own decision, then he was asked to make consensus estimate concerning the choice and to rate the one of 1% rate the traits of 1% who agreed and who refuse to wear the sign. So again in this case again a step towards an action, so whether the individual would carry on an action as per his personal attributes, so I have decided that I have I have stated that this is my personality attribute, I like doing this. My here I am not really keen to carry on that action, so a conflict is created and then were asked to see the identity or explore the traits of the individual would agree to carry and who would refuse to carry the sign.

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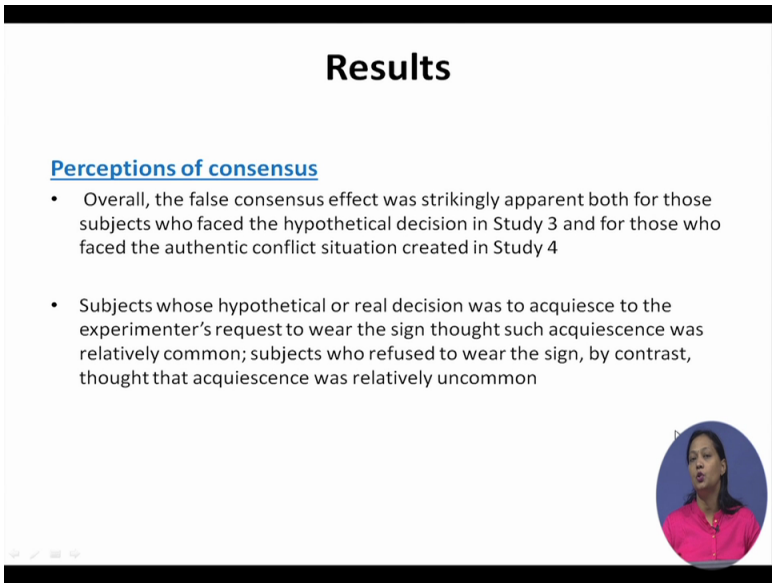

So again the results showed that there was a perception of consensus. So overall the false consensus effect was strikingly apparent both for those subjects who faced the hypothetical decision in study three and for those who faced the authentic conflict situation created in study 4.

So here in both the situations there was a false consensus effect, so subjects hypothetical or real decision was to acquiesce to the experimenter's request to wear the sign thought that this was relatively common so those who agreed where the sign that this was a relatively common and subjects who refuse to wear the sign thought that you know accepting this was pretty uncommon, so again people are going by their own choice. So what do these experiments or what do these studies on false consensus effect tell us?

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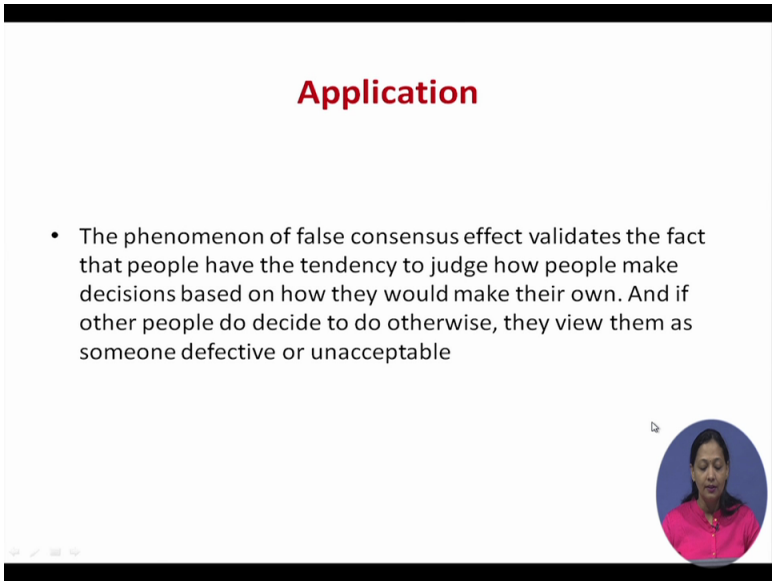

This shows that people have the tendency to judge how people make decisions based on how they would make their own decisions. And if other people do decide to do otherwise, they view them as someone defective and unacceptable. So this is probably where know the idea concept of us and them starts. So anybody was not behaving the way I am doing, does not belong to my group so we people or our people think in a particular way, those people or them, they think in a different way and that is how probably the first streaks of prejudice develop and you know these idea of groupism is come into being.

So generally social psychology other experiments also show that you know specially individual studies they show that you know when we are attribute being positive qualities it is to ourselves and people whom we like, whom we prefer the attribute positive quality to them because we consider them as that is a we group, so they belong to our group. And people who are behaving differently they definitely have they are seen to have all the negative qualities, qualities that we do not attribute ourselves with.

So this I thought that this would be an interesting study to discuss with you and you could probably when we are talking of psychology and experimentation, you could probably try out this thing for yourself with your friends and colleagues and see whether the false consensus if it actually works. You can create a situation of your own royal story and then you have these questions and you can give it to people and all so along with you can see at how would they so there would be two questions.

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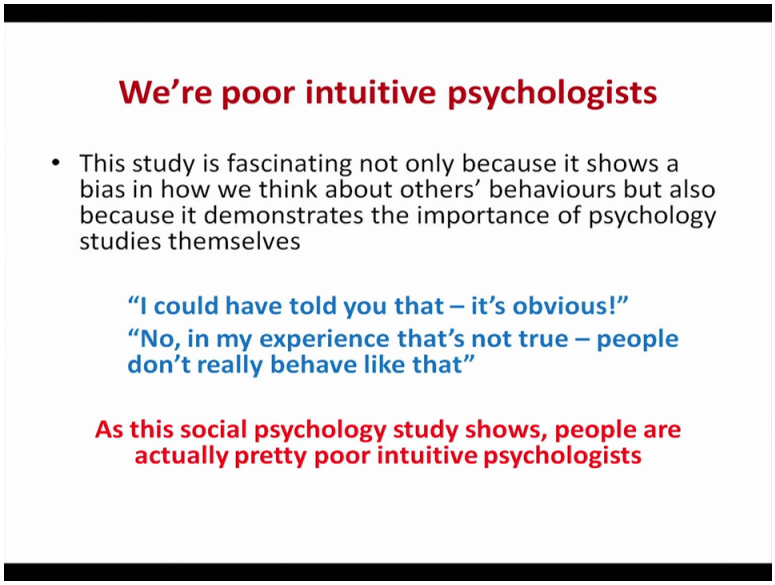

So it could be that how would the others how many people would agree to this how many people would disagree and what would you have done? So you could carry you could conduct your own experiment see whether the false consensus effect works. So that brings us to the idea for to be inference that we are actually very poor intuitive psychologist and it we generally when we are when somebody saying that I could have told you that or this was obvious or in my experience is not true.

So most of the time when you are talking about psychology we talk like this. Now assess what differentiates talking about psychology and actually practice in psychology as a scientific subject and this shows that we you know to come to infer about human attitude, human behaviour you need to do that through an experimental setting rather than basing it on personal opinion and judgements.

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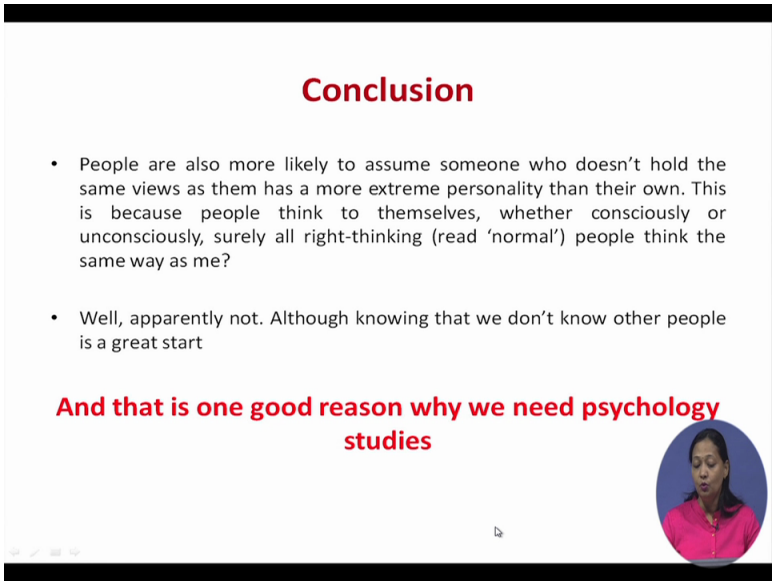

So to conclude can say that people are more likely to assume someone who does not hold the same views as them having a different personality than their own this is because people think to themselves, whether consciously or unconsciously. That surely all right-thinking or normal people, normal thinking people think the same way as me because I consider myself as a normal healthy intelligent individual so I am sure others are also thinking like me. Well apparently not and although knowing that we do not know other people that would be a great start to understanding psychology and that is why we need psychology studies. Thank you.